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ABSTRACT

John Thomson was a nineteenth-century British photojournalist who used the wet-plate process to illustrate his explorations of eastern and Southeast Asia. His travels from 1862 to 1872 took him to the following places, among others: Ceylon, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Saigon, Siam, mainland China, and Taiwan. Thomson chose to use the wet-plate process, despite its problems and demands, because of the quality of negative possible. As one of the earliest European photojournalists to work in Asia, Thomson produced work that goes beyond mere documentation; it presents the grandeur of the Asian landscapes and gives probing images of living people that together convey a full sense of the land. He also experienced many difficulties with malaria, hostile people, and harsh climates. He was especially interested in the "small trades" and in anonymous individuals who could not pay for their portraits and who are thus underrepresented in the works of most Victorian photographers. A bibliography of Thomson's work is included. (CC)

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John Thomson: Photojournalist in Asia, 1862-1872

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Today, surrounded by photographs, it is difficult to conceive of a world seen only through another person's drawing skills and via poor quality reproduction. Many reasons came together towards the end of the nineteenth century to propel Englishmen abroad, especially photographers anxious to take pictures of exotic lands, previously seen only through drawings. John Thomson was one of those photographers who ventured into Asia.[1] Nowadays, he would be called a photojournalist. A precise description of photojournalism[2] is not necessary here, but generally this new trade included the following: photography done in the documentary tradition, reproduced by some mechanical means, and accompanied by verbal description.

The term "documentary" itself does not allow for a short, unequivocal explanation, but it might be thought of "as a depiction of the real world by a photographer whose intent is to communicate something of importance--to make a comment--that will be understood by the viewer"[3] and that implies a "quality of authenticity implicit in the sharply-focused, unretouched straight photography. . .which often gives it special value as evidence or proof."[4] This visual veracity, of course, is what the public wanted.

One of the first and most insightful comments on the importance of the "exactly repeatable pictorial statement" was written by Ivins, a former curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[5] By defining prints from a functional point of view, rather than only as art, he makes it clear that modern science and our conception of a world we do not personally observe are based on the ability to convey information through pictorial statements which can be easily and exactly duplicated. It is not necessary to trace the history of various types of printmaking processes, but it is important to realize the part played by the technology of the printing process during the latter half of the nineteenth century and thereby the public's view of other parts of the world.

Although known for centuries, even the woodcut was not used in newspapers until 1842.[6] The first news events were covered by artists who gave their sketches to engravers or woodblock makers to be converted into metal casts from which the thousands of copies could be printed.[7] Later, Daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and the products of other early photographic processes would serve as originals for the engraver or block maker. This approach meant that only linedrawings could be printed, not the continuous-tone grays that were, and are, the hallmark of the photographic process.[8] Pictures in the illustrated magazines and newspapers at the time of the Crimean War and the American Civil War carried the caption, "From a Daguerreotype."[9] Printing photographs on an ordinary press together with type was not possible until the invention of the halftone plate in the 1880's.[10] The first newspaper illustrated exclusively with photographs was not published until 1904 in London.[11]

Thomson did not use the halftone process, which appeared after his trips to Asia. He used a reproduction process known as the Woodburytype for the mechanical reproduction of his photographs. This process still did not allow pictures to be printed at the same time as the type or "letterpress". Like many other processes of the time, the resulting prints had to be "tipped in" or pasted on blank pages, to be bound later into books or magazines as a separate sheet.[12] The speed of production would not seem to be especially critical to defining photojournalism. The Woodburytype will be discussed further below.

The third characteristic of photojournalism is that photographs and text "are mutually coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative."[13] This effectively excludes many of Thomson's contemporaries who "published" photographs by making thousands of prints and selling them in portfolios or as postcard views--or most popular of all, stereoscope views.[14] Some of Thomson's photographs were however, also, published as stereographs.[15]

At this point in the history of photography, it would be trivial and not particularly germane for the following discussion to try and document John Thomson as the first photojournalist. There is little doubt he was among the first.

Thomson was most certainly not the first European photographer to work in Asia. E. Brown, Jr. and a man named Draper had accompanied Commodore Perry's expedition to Asia, 1852-4. The official report of the expedition, A Narrative of the Expedition to the China Seas and Japan, was accompanied by woodcuts and lithographs based on Daguerreotypes.[16] Another photographer, Felice A. Beato, had been in China about the same time as Thomson. Beato, along with Roger Fenton, photographed the Crimean War and continued to India in 1857. From India, he went on to China, attaching himself to the Anglo-French campaign against China, where he covered the capture of Fort Taku at Tientsin and, later, the destruction of the Imperial Summer Palace north of Peking in October, 1860.[17] Thomson arrived there in 1372 and described the destruction.[18]

Little is known of Thomson's early life before he left for Asia. Even now, although well-known for his documentary work in England which post-dated his Asian work, his name is consistently misspelled.[19] This paper is a preliminary attempt to present at least the broad outlines of his travels and photographic work in Asia.

Thomson was born in Edinburgh, an early center of British photography, in 1837. He attended the university there, where he majored in chemistry and may have done some architectural photography.[20] Edinburgh was the home of Henry Fox Talbot, the inventor of the negative-positive process. The most famous users of the Talbotype process, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, were also in the city.[21]

Thomson's first exposure to Asia is uncertain. His obituary, published in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, says he landed in Ceylon in 1862.[22] Thomson's own writing gives 1862 as the date he set out overland, through Europe,

for Ceylon. He returned, due to illness, to England in 1865;[23] however, he continues that he had hoped to compare Hindu and Buddhist buildings in central Ceylon with "the magnificent remains of the cities, temples, and palaces I had just visited in the heart of Cambodia", suggesting that sometime between 1862 and 1865, he had made a trip to Cambodia.[24] He later mentions that the first time he saw Singapore was in 1861.[25]

It is the next trip that is usually referred to when historians talk of his Asian travels, and, although the information is still sketchy, we can plot his travels through Southeast- and East-Asia for about the next decade with some assurance. On this journey, he sailed directly for Penang, off the northern coast of present day Malaysia, remaining there for 10 months.[26] This may be an approximation because later he says he arrived in Bangkok, via Singapore, at the end of September, 1865[27] which would place him in Penang at the end of 1864. At any rate, while in Penang, he hired two "Madras men" as printers and assistants who were the "color of a well-sunned nitrate of silver stain all over"[28] because the Chinese "refused to lend themselves to such devilry as taking likenesses of objects without the touch of human hands."[29] Using Penang as a center, he made short trips to the mainland, among them one to "Quedah" where he met the Rajah, who explained his role in the Larut wars of the 1860's.[30] Touring in Province Wellesley, he met a countryman, "a big, brawny Scotsman."[31] Proceeding down the Malay coast, he stopped in Malacca for a short time, finding it "neither interesting nor . . . profitable."[32] He arrived in Singapore sometime in 1865.[33]

While there he either borrowed a studio or set one up temporarily where he took a number of pictures.[34] Because of his penchant for side trips from major centers and the existence of one book attributed, but not positively, to Thomson and his references to Java in later work, we can speculate that he may have also gone across the Straits to Java.[35]

From Singapore, he sailed for Bangkok, arriving there on the 28th of September 1865.[36] While in Bangkok, he met the reigning King Mongkut (Rama IV), who he mentions as looking for a foreign inventor that would invent a gun that would shoot a ball that would penetrate only one-half inch of skin to strike terror into the hearts of his subjects without being fatal and would then enable the King, miraculously, to save them.[37] He was also invited to photograph the King kneeling at prayer in the uniform of a French Field Marshall.[38] After a trip up the Chao Phraya river to visit the ancient capital of Ayuthia, where he was charged by a buffalo he was trying to photograph,[39] he left for Siemreap on January 27, 1866. One Mr. Kennedy of the British Consulate accompanied Thomson, along with two boatmen and four servants to carry the photographic equipment. He carried a passport issued by King Mongkut which he says was of great help. Later, the King would give him a letter imploring him to "state verbally or in books, in newspapers, public papers" that the Angkor ruins belong to Siam, "for 84 years ago."[40] At the same time, King Mongkut thought this foreigner somewhat insane for wanting to take pictures of old ruins.[41]

The trip from Bangkok to Siemreap took slightly more than a month via river boat, ponies, buffalo wagons, and elephants. Along the way, Thomson suffered from an attack of "jungle fever" which left him so weak he was unable to walk for some time.[42] Under the ministration of Kennedy and treatment with quinine, the malaria was arrested.[43] Perhaps malaria was the reason he had earlier returned to England from Ceylon in 1862.

The chronology of the trip seems to indicate a stop of about three weeks at the Angkor Wat/Angkor Thom complex where he shot the photographs that would appear in Antiquities of Cambodia[44] in 1867. The onset of the dry season dictated that the party return to Bangkok by a different route, so the party proceeded to Phnom Penh,[45] arriving there on March 27, 1866.

While in Phnom Penh, he photographed the King of Cambodia[46] who provided an escort and elephants from Phnom Penh to Kampot where they boarded a boat and, with a fair wind, returned to Bangkok five days later, on the 19th of April.[47] His account in The Straits of Malacca, ... seems to indicate that at some time he visited Saigon, but no definite date or evidence is given.[48]

Returning to Singapore, Thomson once again sailed for England. This is shown by his manuscript account of the journey to Cambodia dated August 15, 1866 in Edinburgh.[49] The Edinburgh Photographic Society also announced that "Mr. John Thomson would lecture on a visit to Siam and Cambodia, and exhibit a series of his original photographs of scenery, architecture, and people, by aid of the lantern, as usual," in December 1866.[50] It was also in 1866 that he was elected to the Royal Geographical Society.[51] The same year he was elected to the Royal Ethnological Society of London and gave Edinburgh as his address.[52]

In 1867, The Antiquities of Cambodia[53] was published and he took photographs for a book issued to commemorate the laying of the first submarine telegraph line across the North Atlantic by the steamship Great Eastern.[54]

Little is known of the next two years, but at least by December of 1869, he was back in Asia where he took photographs for a book to commemorate the Duke of Edinburgh's visit to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong.[55] He probably took a series of views for inclusion in a series of 17 photos in a book entitled Views in South China,[56] although this is currently not positively attributed to him.

Among ads for Bristols Sarsaparilla (for "enlarged knees, gout, cancer") and Florida Water ("sure cure for relieving nervousness"), Thomson advertised his studio in The Daily Press (Hong Kong). In the "Intimations" column he announced that he had "opened his new rooms," next door to Messrs. Lane, Crawford & Co. on Queen's Road.[57] In the same issue, the second edition of Beach's book on the Royal Visit of 1869 was advertised because "of a general wish expressed to the Compiler that

the work should take a permanent form."[58]

To the historian of photography, Thomson's most interesting comments deal with his photographic problems and those of his local colleagues. Although slightly easier to use than the albumen process used by Beato around Peking in 1860 which required fresh egg whites, Thomson's use of the collodion, or wet-plate, process still required a great deal of effort, skill, and luck.[59]

The collodion process was Thomson's process of choice, and he continued using it even after the availability of other processes because of the quality of negative possible. The process required that the photographer take along a full complement of equipment, even the darkroom itself, to the locale. Thomson's darkroom was a three-sided tent constructed of two thicknesses of black cloth held up with a tripod of bamboo with a small window on one side covered with yellow cloth to allow a small amount of light inside for "safe" illumination that would not spoil the plates.[60]

The process began with a piece of cleaned, polished glass coated with a thin layer of collodion which had to be smooth and of uniform thickness. While in Cambodia, he was forced to use a section of large bamboo as a bottle and pourer for the collodion.[61]

The next step was to bathe the coated plate in a solution of silver nitrate under the dim light of the portable darkroom. Thomson said that the silver nitrate solution was like a person: "To do its work well its strength must be kept up, and it is dangerous to tamper with its constitution."[62] The next step is the one that actually kept the photographer tied to the darkroom since the plate with emulsion had to be exposed in the camera and the processing finished before the plate began to dry. After exposure, Thomson treated the plate while still damp, with ammonia sulfate of iron.[63] After being thoroughly washed in rain water, the plate could be brought out of the tent, fixed with potassium cyanide and dried in the sun.

Thomson, perhaps because of his university background in chemistry, modified the process at this point so the dried plate could be redeveloped at a later time which he said led to "superior cleanliness in working, greater comfort in the tent and a saving of time."[64] A slight mistake in any step would spell disaster for the negative and the solutions. The exact working of the process was dependent on the skill and experience of the photographer.[65] The accuracy and simplicity of modern photography with tools such as automatic cameras with photoelectric exposure meters and accurate temperature-controlled processes were unknown. The negative was then printed on sensitized paper.

A further improvement in the process was patented by Adolphe-Eugene Disderi in France in 1854. By using a multi-lensed camera and a plateholder that moved, a single negative with eight or twelve different poses was produced and then printed on a sheet of albumen paper which was cut apart into carte-de-visite's. By increasing the production of the skilled operator, the price was thereby reduced, widening the circle of people who could afford the pictures.[66] Thomson apparently took many of these carte-de-visites, although most lack positive attribution.[67]

Near Thomson's studio in Hong Kong, there were a "score of Chinese photographers who do better work than is produced by the herd of obscure dabblers" in England.[68] One photographer who rated this high opinion was A-Hung who explained some of the differences between photographing foreigners and Chinese:

> You foreigners always wish to be taken off the straight or perpendicular. It is not so with our men of taste; they must look straight at the camera so as to show their friends at a distance that they have two eyes and ears. They won't have shadows about their faces, because, you see, shadow forms no part of the face. It isn't one's nose, or any other feature; therefore it should not be there. The camera, you see, is defective. It won't work up to that point; it won't recognize our laws of art. [69]

Although the English foreigner may not have agreed with the final effect, it should be noted that this is one of the earliest recognitions that photography is not 'real' and is dependent on the photographer and viewer for an interpretation of the print.

In 1870, Thomson went up the Pearl River to Canton and the grotto of Kwan Yin, visited Macao, and then began to make his way north, up the China coast.[70] He usually found great hospitality all over China, the exception being some of the larger cities.[71] He stopped first at Swatow, describing in detail the fan-painters, and then Ch' aochou where he got up early one day to escape the "city mob" to photograph an old bridge. But not early enough: he had just enough time to set up the equipment and take a photograph when

> a howling multitude came rushing down to where I stood near my boat on the shore. Amid a shower of missiles I unscrewed my camera, with the still undeveloped photograph inside, took the apparatus under my arm, and presenting my iron-pointed tripod to the rapidly approaching foe, backed into the river and scrambled on board the boat.[72]

The next stop was Amoy, from where he sailed with Dr. Maxwell, a medical missionary, to Takow in southern Taiwan on the first of April, 1871.[73] After traveling through the interior of Taiwan and visiting the area around present-day Kaohsiung, he returned to the mainland, landing at Foochow in time to photograph a thief who had been hung by the thumbs, only bones remaining.[74] Touring the coastal area, he stopped to photograph a peddler, who was so entranced by the foreigner who was also a photographer, that he ran into two buffaloes who knocked the peddler into a nearby ditch, from which he emerged, unhurt and still staring at the strange sight.[75]

He arrived in Shanghai in the wake of a typhoon,[76] perhaps on May 29, 1871, when a "Thompson" arrived aboard the Kwangtung.[77]

In August 1871, he left Tientsin, the coastal entrance to north China and Peking, after his first visit to the coastal resort town of Chefoo (Yent'ai). His second visit to Yent'ai after suffering from the extreme heat in the summer, was in the winter of 1871-2, and his assistant's ears and nose were frost-bitten and water used to wash the plates frose and hung in icicles from the edges. After visiting Fort Taku, the party moved on to Peking.[78]

In Peking he visited the National University, the Great Wall, and the Summer Palace, among other sights. While there, he made the acquaintance of Mr. Yang, "an amateur, not merely of photography, but of chemistry and electricity," whom he taught to mix some kinds of chemicals. Inturn, Thomson was able to photograph domestic quarters that he would have otherwise been excluded from.[79]

Returning to Shanghai, Thomson had an exhibition and showing of some transparancies at the Royal Asiatic Society, "should the miserable quality of the Shanghai Gas not interfere with their exhibition, by means of the oxy-hydrogen light" and the writer was sure that "all who have examined the work will agree with him in every word of praise."[80]

Two days later, accompanied by two otherwise unidentified Americans, he left Shanghai to ascend the Yangtse, visiting Hankow and Ich'ang along the way. Along the way they were pelted with rocks several times, attacked by pirates, and capsized at least once in the river rapids of the upper Yangtse. The party celebrated Chinese New Year, 1872, at a monastery along the river above Ich'ang. Chang, the party's interpreter complained of the riotous conduct to celebrate the new year, "was himself not without sin, and was indeed unable to stand erect."[81] The group ascended the Yangtse 1300 miles to the mountains of Szechuan, before turning back.

After photographing the people and dramatic scenery of the upper Yangtse gorges, Thomson returned to Nanking, hoping to take a portrait of Tseng Kuo-fen, who was prominent in putting down the Taiping Rebellion, only to discover that he had died

in March.[82] Thinking of it later, Thomson decided it was just as well he had not arrived earlier or he might have been thought responsible for Tseng's death by taking "a certain portion of the vital principle." He was frequently looked upon as a forerunner of death and people fell on their knees beseeching him not to take their likeness before the "fatal lens."[83] In addition, anti-foreign propaganda described how the foreigners needed to use the eyes of Chinese children to make photographs.[84]

Returning again to Shanghai, "Positive" writing in the North-China Herald remarks on the photographs and their "instantaneous aspect". The article concludes that "before returning to England Mr. Thomson is now paying a short visit to the Snowy Valley" to photograph a Buddhist monastery.[85]

Illustrations of China and Its People was published in four large volumes (about 19" x 14½") during 1873 and 1874.[86] Thomson would later publish other books about China, but this was the centerpiece of his China work, from which the others would be derived, standing as "a landmark in the history of illustrated books."[87]

It is important to place the mechanical aspects of the printed book in the proper perspective at the level of graphic arts practiced at the time. Permanency of the image had been a problem of photography since its beginnings in the 1830's. By 1850, the problem of fading was already beginning to become a critical and widely recognized problem of the silver-based photographic print.[88] A North-China Herald writer reviewing Thomson's show in Shanghai, points out that the projected book would be done by a permanent process which "has all the delicacy of detail of the fleeting silver prints, while it is lasting as a lithograph."[89] The Woodbury-type that the writer referred to was one solution to the fading problem. The process, patented by Walter Bentley Woodbury in 1864, printed pictures with a carbon-black-based ink to assure that the resulting prints were "as permanent as engravings."[90] Not only was the image permanent, but as the North-China Herald noted, it had the

tonal range and definition of the original photograph.

Methods of reproducing the photographic image in facsimile with ink had been used before, but most suffered from various shortcomings. The Woodburytype was noted for its fidelity to the original. One of the foremost photographic historians states flatly that "no finer process for reproducing photographs than the now unfortunately obsolete Woodburytype has ever been devised."[91] Thomson himself recognised the advantages and beauty of the Woodbury process in his editing of T[illegible]sandier's A History and Handbook of Photography in 1878:

> "What principally excites admiration of this new process is that the proofs obtained by it are almost exactly similar to those produced by ordinary photographic process; they have the same colour, the same appearance, and the same fineness of quality."[92]

To make a Woodburytype, the negative was printed on bichromated gelatin and developed in warm water to produce a copy of the photograph, but in relief. The highlights are valleys and the shadows are hills. A mold of these contours is made by forcing a block of lead against the gelatin under a pressure of 700,000 pounds. The lead plate/mold is then placed in a special press and a semi-transparent ink is applied, the paper pressed against it and a print or facsimile obtained with variations in the thickness of the ink deposit.[93]

The reproduction was then pasted on blank pages of books or magazines. It was not until the 1880's that photographs could be printed at the same time as type matter.[94] If for no other reason, Illustrations of China and Its People should be known for the quality of reproduction.

In fact, as Naef comments, Thomson's work is removed from "mere documentation" and "suggests the grandeur of the landscape . . . (combined) with very probing images of living people that together convey a full sense of the land."[95]

Much of the power and interest of Thomson's work lies in the documentation

of what a modern photographer has called the "small trades"[96] and the anonymous individuals that could not pay for portraits and are therefore underrepresented in the works of Victorian photographers. Subjects of everyday life are the basis of his photography and his interest would find another outlet in 1877-1878 when he began publishing another series of prints. again utilizing the Woodbury process, entitled Street Life in London, often cited as among the earliest published examples of social documentation in photography.[97]

Thomson did not give up photography on his return from China. In the fall of 1878, just after England had taken over Cyprus, he went there and produced two volumes of work on the island.[98]

For many years he was instructor in photography for the Royal Geographical Society at the same time running a studio in Mayfair, London noted for "at home" portarits of notables.[99] He never forgot the words of his introduction to Illustrations of China and Its People. " My design in the accompanying work is to present a series of pictures of China and its people, such as shall convey an accurate impression of the country I traversed as well as of the arts, usages, and manners which prevail in different provinces of the Empire."[100] As a scientist, and professional observer, he could be expected to and did, publish much work on the technical side of exploration and on photography in technical articles,[101] but he never lost sight of the fact that "the faithfulness of . . . pictures affords the nearest approach that can be made towards placing the reader actually before the scene which is represented."[102] Although it speaks of Street Life in London, the following applies just as well to the Asian work: "Thomson relied on the precision of photography to present his subjects in a direct and visually accurate manner that would shield him from the accusation of distorting scenes. The results are objective and unsentimental, yet a sensitive photographic survey. . ."[103]

In a letter dated five days before he died in 1921, he states again his

"ambition to see photography take its proper place as a means of illustrating exploration" and his hope that "all travelers should take full advantage of its wonderful possibilities."[104]

This paper is not intended to be a biography of John Thomson. At the present time, there are too many blanks in our knowledge of his life and work, even if limited to Asia. It is rather a chronology of his Asian travels. He was not only an observant nineteenth century photographer, an extremely skilled practioner who could draw the deepest expression from the wet-plate process, nor a pioneer photojournalist in Asia--he was all of these. Perhaps these preliminary notes will stimulate more research into Thomson's Asian years and serve as an outline of his travels.

NOTES

[1] Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, The history of photography from the camera obscura to the present day, (London, Thames & Hudson, 1969), pp. 280-92 (hereafter cited as Gernsheim, History).

[2] Clifton C. Edom, Photojournalism: Principles and practice, (Dubuque, Iowa, Wm. C. Brown, 1976), p. 25. According to Edom, the word "photojournalism" was coined by Frank Luther Mott in 1942.

[3] Time-Life editors, Documentary photography, (New York, Time-Life, 1972), p. 12.

[4] Beaumont Newhall, The history of photography from 1839 to the present day, (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1964), p. 137 (hereafter cited as Newhall, History).

[5] William M. Ivins, Jr., Prints and visual communication, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo, 1968), p. 3.

[6] Time-Life editors, Photojournalism, (New York, Time-Life, 1971), p. 12.

[7] Ibid., p. 13.

[8] Ibid., p. 14.

[9] Newhall, History, p. 175-6.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, A concise history of photography, (New York, Grosset and Dunlap, 1965), p. 244.

[12] Newhall, History, p. 175.

[13] James Agee and Walker Evans, Let us now praise famous men, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. xv; also, see Wilson Hicks, Words and pictures, (New York, Harper and Row, 1952; reprint ed., New York: Arno, 1973).

[14] Gernsheim, History, pp. 253-62; 275-303.

[15] Thomson also shot stereo views from which prints were made from one side.

[16] Weston Naef, Introduction to Behind the Great Wall of China, Cornell Capa, ed., (Greenwich, Conn., New York Graphic Society, 1972) unpaged (hereafter cited as Naef, Great Wall) and Gernsheim, History, p. 128.

[17] Gernsheim, History, pp. 270-1.

[18] John Thomson, Through China with a camera, (Westminster, A. Constable, 1898; reprint ed., San Francisco, Chinese Materials Center, 1974), pp. 263-4 (hereafter cited as Thomson, Through China).

[19] e. g. Albert Boni, ed., Photographic literature (New York, Morgan & Morgan, 1962) and Arnold Gassan, A chronology of photography, (Athens, Ohio, Handbook, 1972) both show Thomson as Thompson.

[20] Royal Geographical Society, "Obituary: John Thomson," Journal 58 (1921): 470 (hereafter cited as Obituary: Thomson).

[21] Gernsheim, History, p. 162-8.

[22] Obituary: Thomson.

[23] John Thomson, F. R. G. S., The Straits of Malacca, Indo China, and China; or ten years' travels, adventures, and residence abroad, (New York, Harper and Bros., 1875), p. 1 (hereafter cited as Thomson, Straits).

[24] Ibid., p. 1-2.

[25] Ibid., p. 53.

[26] Ibid., p. 8.

[27] Ibid., p. 78-9.

[28] Ibid., p. 8.

[29] Ibid., p. 9.

[30] Ibid., p. 23.

[31] Ibid., p. 28.

[32] Ibid., p. 52.

[33] John Thomson, The antiquities of Cambodia, (Edinburgh, Edmonston & Douglas, 1867), p. 7.

[34] Time-Life editors, Documentary photography, pp. 20-1.

[35] e. g., see John Thomson, "Practical photography in tropical regions (1)," British journal of photography 13 (10 Aug. 1866): 380.

[36] Thomson, Straits, p. 78.

[37] Ibid., p. 90.

[38] Ibid., p. 93.

[39] Ibid., p. 106.

[40] John Thomson, "Notes of a journey through Siam to the ruins of Cambodia communicated to the Royal Geographical Society," unpublished manuscript, 15 August 1866, Archives, Royal Geographical Society. This was unpublished because Kennedy's account was used.

[41] Thomson, Straits, p. 98.

[42] Thomson, Antiquities of Cambodia, p. 8.

[43] Thomson, "Notes of a journey through Siam."

[44] Gernsheim, History, p.288, cites the title as Gambodia. The title of the copy in the Gernsheim collection is Cambodia.

[45] Thomson, Antiquities of Cambodia, p. 8.

[46] Thomson, Straits, p. 157.

[47] Thomson, Antiquities of Cambodia, p. 8.

[48] Thomson, Straits, p. 164.

[49] See note 40.

[50] "Edinburgh photographic society," British journal of photography 13 (14 Dec. 1866): 598-9.

[51] Obituary: Thomson.

[52] Beverley Emery to author, 1 June 1977. Thomson was a member until 1870. The Ethnological Society of London has now been absorbed by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

[53] See note 44.

[54] John Thomson, A short description of the photographs of the Atlantic telegraph cable machinery taken on board the steamship "Great Eastern," (Liverpool, n. p., 1867).

[55] William R. Beach (Comp.), Visit of His Royal Higness the Duke of Edinburgh, K. G., K. T., G. C. M. G., to Hongkong in 1869, (Hongkong, Noronha, 1869).

[56] Private collection.

[57] 1 Aug. 1870. The advertisement ran for several weeks.

[58] 24 Aug. 1870 This advertisement also ran for several weeks.

[59] Gernsheim, History, p. 271. Naef, Great Wall, suggests this may have impeded the usefulness of the the process, but Gernsheim, p. 195, says the part of the process requiring egg whites could be done in advance, at the expense of sensitivity. The exposures might run to 30 minutes.

[60] John Thompson, "Practical photography in tropical regions (3)," British journal of photography 13 (24 Aug. 1866): 404. For a short description of the collodion process, see Newhall, History, pp. 47-9.

[61] John Thomson, "Practical photography in tropical regions (4)," British journal of photography 13 (14 Sept. 1866): 436-7.

[62] Ibid.

[63] John Thomson, "Practical photography in tropical regions (5)," British journal of photography 13 (5 Oct. 1866): 472-3. Newhall, History, p. 48, says protosulfate of iron or pyrogallic acid was usually used in temperate regions.

[64] Ibid.

[65] A full discussion and description may be found in Gaston Tissandier's, A history and handbook of photography (London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle,& Rivington, 1878), edited by Thomson.

[66] Newhall, History, p. 49.

[67] For examples, see Time-Life editors, Documentary Photography, pp. 20-1.

[68] John Thomson, "Hong Kong photographers," British journal of photography 19 (29 Nov. 1872): 569.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Thomson, Straits, p. 279.

[71] Thomson, Through China, pp. 90-3.

[72] Ibid.

[73] John Thomson, "Notes of a journey in southern Formosa," Journal, Royal Geographical Society 43 (1873): 97-107.

[74] Thomson, Straits, pp. 363-4.

[75] Ibid., p. 384.

[76] Thomson, Through China, p. 171.

[77] North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette, 1 Aug. 1871. This newspaper cited hereafter as North-China Herald. The name confusion continues; see note 19.

[78] Thomson, Through China, p. 224.

[79] Ibid., pp. 257-8.

[80] North China Herald, 11 Jan. 1872.

[81] Thomson, Straits, p. 426.

[82] Ibid., p. 462. Tseng died on 12 March 1872.

[83] Ibid., p. 463.

[84] The Times (London), 28 Sept. 1864.

[85] North-China Herald, 4 Apr. 1872.

[86] "Illustrations of China and its people," British journal of photography 20 (28 Nov. 1873): 569-70.

[87] Weston J. Naef, "John Thomson's Illustrations of China and Its people," Metropolitan Museum of Art bulletin (Feb/Mar 1972): 194-5 Hereafter cited as Naef, Bulletin).

[88] Gernsheim, History, pp. 335-45.

[89] North-China Herald, 11 Jan. 1872.

[90] Advertisement in Tissandier, Handbook, p. 2 (advertisements).

[91] Newhall, History, p. 175.

[92] Tissandier, Handbook, p. 215.

[93] Ibid. Also, see Gernsheim, History, pp. 340-1 and Newhall, History, p. 175.

[94] Edom, Photojournalism, pp. 14-8.

[95] Naef, Bulletin, p. 194.

[96] Irving Penn, Moments preserved, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1960).

[97] Robert Doty, "Street life in London,"Image 56 (Dec. 1957): 240-5.

[98] John Thomson, Through Cyprus with the camera, in the autumn of 1878, (London, Samson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1879).

[99] Gernsheim, History, p. 447.

[100] Quoted in Naef, Great Wall.

[101] e. g., "Photography and exploration," Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society 13 n. s.(1892): 669-675; "Practical photography in tropical regions," British journal of photography 13 (5 parts, 10 Aug. to 5 Oct., 1866); and report of "Photography applied to exploration," The Times (London), 25 August 1891.

[102] Quoted in Naef, Great Wall.

[103] Clevland Museum of Art bulletin 62 (1975): 38-9.

[104] John Thomsnn to Mr. Hinks, 2 Oct. 1921. Archives, Royal Geographical Society.

Appendix 1

Below is the major body of Thomson's work dealing with Asia. These are not bibliographically definitive because of the large number of editions and impressions. Work is continuing by various scholars on the attribution and documentation of other Thomson-attributed images, especially some found in magazines and the carte-de-visites.

The antiquities of Cambodia: A series of photographs taken on the spot with letterpress description (Edinburgh, Edmonston & Douglas, 1867).

Visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, K. G., K. T. G. C. M. G., to Hongkong in 1869, (Hong Kong, Norohna & Sons, 1869). Compiled by William R. Beach.

Views of the North River, (Hong Kong, Norohna & Sons, 1870).

Illustrations of China and its people; A series of photographs with letter-press descriptive of the places and people represented, (London, Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searl, 1873-1874). 4 vols. These volumes are the most noted of Thomson's work and are usually found in rare book collections or museums.

The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China; or ten years travels, adventures, and residence abroad (New York, Harper & Bros., 1875). Based on Thomson's photographs, etchings were made for this udated version.

The land and people of China: A short account of the geography, history and government of China and its people, (London, Christian Knowledge Society, 1876). A smaller, abridged edition of Illustrations of China.

Through China with a camera (Westminster, A. Constable & Co., 1898). This book utilized the halftone process to reproduce many of the collotypes from Illustrations of China and the text was revised to reflect events between 1873 and 1898. A reprint edition is available (San Francisco, Chinese Materials Center, 1974), but the illustration quality is extremely poor.

Appendix 2

List of slides presented

Photographic quality should not be judged from these slides. Many are third- and fourth-generation reproductions. Titles and dates are as given in the original source. Sources given are those from which the slides were made.

1 John Thomson and fiance, c. 1868.
Great Wall

2-7 Singapore, 1860's
Time-Life Documentary Photography

8 Palace of the Leprous King from Antiquities of Cambodia
Gernsheim Collection

9 Nakhon Wat from Antiquities of Cambodia
Gernsheim Collection

10 Nakhon Wat from Antiquities of Cambodia
Gernsheim Collection

11 Interior of western gallery, Nakhon Wat from Antiquities of Cambodia
Gernsheim Collection

12 Part of a reservior from Antiquities of Cambodia
Gernsheim Collection

13 Gateway in center of of western gallery, from Antiquities of Cambodia
Gernsheim Collection

14 Laos village interior of Siam
Royal Geographical Society

15 Forest
Royal Geographical Society

16 A view of Hongkong from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia 6:3 (June 1976) All items from Arts of Asia are from this issue.

17 The Clock Tower, Hong Kong from Illustrations of China
Great Wall

18 A Hongkong artist from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

19 A Canton lady from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

20 Tea-picking in Canton from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

21 A pagoda in southern China from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

22 Jui Lin, Govenor-general of the two Kwang provinces from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

23 Physic Street, Canton from Illustrations of China
Great Wall

24 Tea-tasting room, Canton from Illustrations of China
Great Wall

25 The abbot and monks of Kushan monastery from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

26 Bridge of Chow Chou Fu from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

27 A Peking home from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

28 The central street of Peking from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

29 The Nanking arsenal from Illustrations of China
Arts of Asia

30 Old Wang, Peking from Illustrations of China
Great Wall

31-34 Heads from Illustrations of China
Great Wall

35 The canque from Illustrations of China
Great Wall